

he should venture to return without leave. The stringent application of this reactionary statute drove the more moderate of the Puritans to conform. It left the more extreme section no alternative but to seek relief from persecution across the North Sea. The new-born Dutch Republic became a land of refuge to these staunch sectaries whom a despotic government drove from the shores of England as rebels and anarchists. Thus began that emigration movement for conscience' sake which was destined to such high and mighty purposes in the colonisation of a new world, and in the vindication of public as well as religious liberty. Imperious Elizabeth and her intolerant, servile hierarchy might imagine that they were safeguarding an autocratic system of government and an autocratic Church from insubordination. In reality they were laying the foundation of one of the mightiest democracies of modern times. Happily, in the mysterious designs of Providence, it is sometimes given to the despised and persecuted outcasts to shape history all unconscious to themselves or their persecutors. Most of these expatriated sectaries, to whom the Dutch Republic in the meantime offered a welcome asylum, were known by the opprobrious name of Brownists or Barrowists. For such, expatriation, though a bitter fate, was at least a back door of escape from imprisonment and the scaffold.

Brown, their founder, had belied his principles by conforming and filling an obscure cure in Northamptonshire, where, according to Fuller, he lived a rather disorderly life, and ultimately died in 1630 in Northampton jail. His place as leader of the sect had been taken by Mr Barrow, a gentleman of Gray's Inn, and by Mr Greenwood, a minister. These men were at length brought to trial, after a long incarceration, in March 1592, and, though they protested their innocence of disloyalty to the queen, were convicted under the statute of 1581 and hanged at Tyburn in the following April. To hang men for sedition, who in all sincerity protested their loyalty and merely wrote and spoke against an ecclesiastical system which they considered unscriptural, might be to the legal mind a just vindication of the royal power. To the non-legal mind it was none the less a barbarous travesty of justice. But death by the hand of the hangman was, after all, preferable to